

In 2019, Morocco made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Kingdom of Morocco claims the territory of Western Sahara and administers the area that it controls by the same constitution, laws, and structures as in internationally-recognized Morocco, including laws that deal with child labor. The government adopted Law 51.17, which requires the government to enact compulsory education for children between the ages of 4 and 16 by 2025 and significantly increased the number of prosecutions related to the worst forms of child labor. However, children in Western Sahara engage in the worst forms of child labor, including forced domestic work. Children also engage in child labor in producing artisanal handicrafts. Laws related to the minimum age for work and the use of children for illicit activities do not meet international standards and the scope of government programs that target child labor is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem.




I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Although research is limited, there is evidence that children in Western Sahara engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation. Commercial sexual exploitation of migrant girls occurs and is reportedly more prevalent in fishing villages and on fishing boats. (1,2) Children, particularly in rural areas, are vulnerable to child labor due to educational barriers similar to those faced in other locations in Morocco, such as insufficient facilities, lack of reliable and safe transportation, and unqualified teachers. (1-3) In general, research has not been conducted to determine the prevalence of child labor in Western Sahara, nor has research found the levels of education among children who are engaged in child labor in Western Sahara. Data on key indicators of children's work and education are not available from the sources used in this report. (4)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

The Moroccan-controlled portion of the territory of Western Sahara is subject to the same laws as internationally recognized Morocco. (2,5) The Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (Polisario Front), an organization that seeks the territory's independence, controls the remaining territory; information on the laws applicable in the remaining portion of the territory is unavailable. (1,2,6-8) Morocco has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor, which the Government of Morocco extends to the areas in Western Sahara that it controls (Table 1).

Table 1. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The Government of Morocco has established laws and regulations related to child labor that extend to Western Sahara (Table 2). However, gaps exist in Morocco's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the prohibition of using children in illicit activities.

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Table 2. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 143 of the Labor Code (9)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 147 and 181 of the Labor Code (9)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Hazardous Child Labor List, Decree No. 2-10-183; Article 181 of the Labor Code (9,10)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Article 10 and 12 of the Labor Code; Article 467-2 of the Penal Code (9)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 448.1, and 448.4-448.5 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (11)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Article 503-2 of the Penal Code (12)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	No		
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	19	Article 4 of Royal Decree of 9 June 1966 (13)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Article 4 of Law No. 44-18 (14)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Articles 448.1 and 448.4 of the Law on Trafficking in Human Beings (11)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	16	Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (15)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 1 of Law No. 04-00 (15)

The government adopted Law 51.17, which requires the government to enact compulsory education for children between the ages of 4 and 16 by 2025. (16,17)

Despite regulations to inform agencies on implementing the Law on Setting Up Employment Conditions of Domestic Workers in 2016, there remain enforcement issues, such as the inability of labor inspectors to inspect closed private residences, in which many domestic workers are employed. (22,34) In addition, the law does not provide explicit protections for self-employed children, those who work in the traditional artisan or handicraft sectors for businesses with fewer than five employees, or those who work on private farms or in residences. Despite assurances from the Government of Morocco that inspectors could inspect in the case of any established labor relationship, often verified through witnesses in the absence of contracts, there is an absence of explicit legal protections that conform to international standards, which require all children to be protected under the law establishing a minimum age for work. (6,9,18,21)

In addition, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not fully cover sectors in which child labor is known to occur, specifically in domestic work (10) Moroccan law does not define using, procuring, or offering children for the production or trafficking of drugs as a separate crime. (5,22)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The Government of Morocco has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 3). Information about labor law and criminal law enforcement in Western Sahara is unavailable. The government does not publicly release information on its labor law enforcement efforts in Western Sahara.

Table 3. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Vocational Integration	Enforces child labor laws and oversees programs on child labor through its child labor task force. (19,22-24) Provides occupational health and safety services, administers social security, and organizes labor inspections and employment services through nationwide satellite offices. (24)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforces prohibitions on human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and other exploitative crimes involving minors, as established in the Penal Code, through the General Directorate of National Security. (2,19,23)
General Prosecutor	Prosecutes criminal offenses against children and processes cases involving women and children within the court system through the Child Labor Units. (1,2,23)
Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family, and Social Development (MSWFSD)	Ensures the continuity of child protection and child labor elimination efforts and expands children's access to education. (25) Implements the Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children. (19,26) Supports 142 Child Reception Centers that provide services to child victims of violence. (22)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	Coordinates efforts to reduce migrant vulnerability to child labor through its Delegate Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs. Promotes migrant children's access to public education facilities in addition to other social services and assistance. (1,16,24,27)
Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research	Provides education and job training to former child workers, including former child domestic workers and migrant youth. (16,19,22)

Following the passage of the Law on Setting Up Employment Conditions of Domestic Workers in 2016, the law entered into force on October 2, 2018. However, despite regulations to inform agencies on implementing the law, there remains enforcement issues, such as the inability of labor inspectors to inspect closed private residences, where many domestic workers are employed. (2,5)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The Government of Morocco has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 4).

Table 4. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Technical Committee Under the Special Ministerial Commission for the Protection and Improvement of Childhood	Ensures inter-sectoral coordination and monitoring of the implementation of international conventions on children's issues through a committee of 25 government bodies, chaired by the Head of the Government of Morocco. Establishes strategies and mechanisms to implement national policies and plans in the area of child protection and in coordination efforts managed primarily at the local and regional levels. (22,28) Met regularly in 2019. (16)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 5).

Table 5. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
MSWFSD's Integrated Public Policy on the Protection of Children in Morocco (PPIPEM)	Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to respond to the exploitation of children, among other issues. (19,24,26,28) Stakeholders in PPIPEM confirmed that formal meetings for review and discussion of progress related to the policy were held during the reporting period. (18) On December 18, 2019, MSWFSD launched an integrated territorial child protection systems pilot-program in 8 provinces. These programs - part of the Integrated Public Child Protection Policy - established provincial child protection committees and child protection support centers at the provincial level. (16)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the Government of Morocco funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, which extended to Western Sahara (Table 6). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of efforts to address the problem in all sectors.

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Table 6. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Tayssir Conditional Cash Transfer Program†	MSWFSD program that provides direct cash transfers to qualifying families whose children meet school attendance criteria, aiming to increase school enrollment and reduce dropout rates, particularly in rural areas. There were 832,500 project participants in 2015–2016 and 509,475 in 2016–2017. (2,6,24,26,30-32) In 2019, the program provided assistance to 2,087,000 students from low-income families (16)

† Program is funded by the Government of Morocco.

‡ The Government of Morocco had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (1,5,24,30,31)

In 2019, the Government of Morocco continued a regularization campaign to provide legal status and documentation to foreign migrants. (16) Although the government has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, including with regard to children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. (1,5,24)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Western Sahara (Table 7).

Table 7. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children who are self-employed, work for artisan and handicraft businesses with fewer than five employees, or work on private farms and in residences.	2017 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use, procuring, and offering of a child for prostitution	2019
	Prohibit by law all types of types of hazardous work that may harm children's health, safety, and morals, including domestic work.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that laws prohibit children from being used, procured for, or offered in illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.	2014 – 2019
Social Programs	Conduct a comprehensive study of children's work activities to inform policies and practices to determine whether they are engaged in or at risk of becoming involved in child labor; and determine the number of child laborers and their education levels.	2013 – 2019
	Remove barriers to education, such as insufficient facilities, lack of reliable and safe transportation, and unqualified teachers, particularly in rural areas.	2015 – 2019
	Expand existing programs to address the scope of the child labor problem, including child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.	2017 – 2019

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